

The Dating Game

by Bill Lockhart

The AB-Connected Mark

Since this will now become a regular feature in *Bottles and Extras*, I should introduce myself. I began collecting bottles by accident when I was researching a book on the El Paso, Texas, soft drink bottling industry. One of the former bottlers whom I interviewed gave me a bottle. Later, I was photographing a collection of bottles, and the collector gave me five duplicates from his collection. Another collector gave me more. After a while I began browsing antique shops. That led to more dealings with collectors. Then I found eBay – what more can I say.

As an archaeologist, a historian, and a sociologist, I have been researching bottles for about ten years now. My goal is to write histories and bottle chronologies for all the bottle-related industries in El Paso, Texas, Southern New Mexico, and Juarez, Mexico, before I retire in about 13 years. Check out my three e-books (all free) at <http://alamo.nmsu.edu/library/lochistory.html>. I currently teach sociology at the Alamogordo branch of New Mexico State University and plan to stay until I retire.

I became interested in finding out more about manufacturer's marks a few years ago when I discovered that some of the things I read in Julian Harrison Toulouse's book *Bottle Makers and Their Marks* (the bible for dating such marks) did not seem to fit what I was seeing on bottles. In addition, I kept finding marks that were not listed. In the last issue of *Bottles and Extras*, I wrote about two such marks from the Knox Glass Bottle Co. Most of "The Dating Game" will be about these makers marks, although I hope to eventually talk about mold seams and other marks on glass made by bottle machines.

In each column that I write, I will discuss some aspect of bottle dating and will ask for your help. Collectors hold a vast array of knowledge because of the possession of large numbers of bottles. The marks on bottles in your collections can help me to come up with more answers. If we work together as a team, we can accomplish much more than anything we can do separately. You may e-mail me, call me, or write – or send information to Kathy here at *Bottles and Extras*. If you have any ideas about manufacturer's marks, date codes, or mold marks, please let me know. I will always acknowledge where I get my information.

Adolphus Busch or American Bottle Co.?

I read as much as I can find about bottles, and I was looking over an archaeological report by James E. Ayers (1984 *Rosemont: The History and Archaeology of Post-1880 Sites in the Rosemont Area, Santa Rita Mountains, Arizona*. Archaeological Series No. 147, Vol. 3. Cultural Resource Management Division, Arizona State Museum, University of Arizona, Tempe) where he talked about "the AB monogram mark of the American Bottle Company." I was surprised because Toulouse claimed that the mark was used by the Adolphus Busch Glass Manufacturing Co. Who was right?

It is fairly easy to figure out why Toulouse assumed the mark was from Adolphus Busch. Busch went into the bottling business to provide containers for Anheuser Busch beer. Most, if not all, bottles bearing the AB-connected mark were beer bottles. Hence, a very logical deduction: the beer bottles were made by Adolphus Busch Glass Manufacturing Co.

Archaeologists cite where they find their information, so I tracked down Ayers' source to an unpublished manuscript written in 1980 and titled "Beer Bottles from the Tucson Urban Renewal Project" (James E. Ayers, William Liesenbein, Lee Fratt, and Linda Eure). It was a study of numerous of beer bottles and bottle fragments excavated in Tucson. Ayers and his associates discovered bottles with the AB-connected mark followed by "Co." This pattern fit the American Bottle Co. name much better than the Adolphus Busch Glass Manufacturing Co. They further found marks of 6 - B, 7 - B, 8 - B, and 9 - B on heels of the AB-connected bottles. These marks were also used on bottles with the A. B. Co. mark known to be used by the American Bottle Co. They also found no 6 - B (or similar) marks on any of the A. B. G. M. Co. bottles known to have been made by Busch.

Ayers' researchers also suggested that the 6-B, 7-B, 8-B, and 9-B marks are one-digit date codes for 1906, 1907, 1908, and 1909. These are found on the heels of bottles embossed with both the AB-connected and A. B. Co. marks. In addition, the group noted 6-S, 7-S, 8-S, and 11-S marks on A. B. Co. bottles. They suggest that the "B" bottles were from the Belleville, Illinois, plant, and the ones marked with "S" were made in the Streator, Ohio, factory.



What the Ayers group said made sense, so I looked for a way to test it. Part of the answer lay in the way the Owens Bottle Machine Co. marketed their product. Until about 1920, Owens only licensed a few glass companies to use their machines. The American Bottle Co. had the exclusive license to make soft drink and beer bottles. Therefore, if Toulouse's dates were correct (he said the AB mark was used from about 1904 to about 1907), and I could find a bottle made by an Owens machine, then the mark must have been used by American. My friend, Bill Lindsey, found an amber beer bottle with the AB-connected mark and an Owens scar (the identifying marking of the Owens Automatic Bottle Machine) on its base. This pretty well confirms the identification of the mark as belonging to the American Bottle Co.

Before we leave the discussion of the AB mark, however, we should examine why Toulouse suggested the 1904-1907 date range. He actually said "Circa [approximately] 1904-1907." In other words, he was guessing at the date, probably based on a combination of manufacturing style and circumstances. Usually, a change in marks is connected to other changes (opening a new branch, changing manufacturing styles, etc.), and the 1904 date would fit that assumption.

Busch entered into the bottle making business to produce containers for the Anheuser Busch brewery in 1886. He merged with the Streator Bottle & Glass Co. and the Ohio Bottle Co. to form the American Bottle Co. According to Warren C. Scoville, in his 1948 book *Revolution in Glassmaking*, the Ohio Bottle Co. was awarded the exclusive licence for the first Owens Automatic Bottle Machine to be used for the manufacture of "beer, porter, ale, and soda-water bottles" on November 1, 1904. The

American Bottle Co. was formed the following year to take advantage of the license on a grander scale.

The year, 1904, could therefore be a somewhat intuitive date for the use of the mark by either Adolphus Busch or the American Bottle Co. to celebrate the merger (although 1905 would have been a better choice). The question of why the mark was used still remains. There is no intuitive reason why Busch (who, after the merger, still produced hand-blown bottles in only one factory) would need two marks. American, however, had major plants in Streator and Belleville, Illinois, and Newark, Ohio, two of which (Streator and Newark) remained in operation even after the company sold out to the Owens-Illinois Glass Co. in 1917. In addition, the firm controlled three other plants used by the former Ohio Bottle Co. The second mark (AB-connected) may have been an identifier for one of the major plants or the Ohio factories. The Belleville plant would be a likely candidate (remember the 6-B, 7-B, 8-B, and 9-B marks discussed earlier?). According to Toulouse, the plants produced bottles by both machine manufacture and hand blowing.

The ending date of 1907, however, remains unexplained. I have found nothing in the history of any of the plants that would suggest a reason for dropping the mark at that time. The date codes (6 -B, etc.) indicate a use of the mark until at least 1909. The three Ohio Bottling Company factories, two at Wooster and one at Massillon, Ohio (part of the original merger to form American), were all closed in 1917, along with the former Busch Belleville plant. That may be a better ending date for the use of the mark. By that time, too, most operations had changed to the use of automatic bottle machines.

The last item we should look at is whether the different markings actually identify the specific plants. It seems likely that the 6-B and 6-S marks are from Belleville and Streator. However, it is possible that the AB-connected, AB-connected with Co., and A. B. Co. are somehow representative of specific plants. The evidence presented by Ayers and his associates suggests that only the A. B. Co. mark was used by the Streator plant, although all three marks may have been used by Belleville. Is it possible that the AB-connected with Co. may have been used only at the Newark plant? If these three plants are identifiable by these marks, what about the plants at Wooster and Massillon? At this point, I really do not know.

In conclusion, we can add some new pieces of information to the bottle dating puzzle. First, the AB-connected mark almost certainly belonged to the American Bottle Co. instead of Adolphus Busch. Second, the dates for the use of the mark probably extend from about 1904 until at least 1909, possibly as late as 1917.

Finally, the heel marks (6-B, 7-B, 8-B, and 9-B as well as 6-S through 11-S) are probably date codes that can be used to help place individual bottles in a specific time period.

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Now, I want to ask you for help. First, I am looking for a bottle with a D-in-a-keystone manufacturer's mark. A photocopied page that someone gave me a long time ago claims that one exists, but I would like someone to confirm that. I suspect it might be the last mark used by a Knox Bottle Co. branch before the company switched to just using a single mark for all of its plants. If you have a bottle with that mark on it, please let me know and also tell me what kind of a bottle it is (perfume? beer? food? something else?) And any numbers that were also embossed on the base.

Second, I am looking for information on the Illinois Pacific Glass Co. (1902-1925), Illinois Pacific Glass Corp. (1925-1930), and Illinois Pacific Coast Co. (1930-1932). According to Toulouse, the first two companies used marks of IPG and IPGCo, although he never states which mark goes with which company. He also shows the marks by themselves, enclosed in a triangle, and enclosed in a diamond. I see IPG in a triangle marks on soda bottles in my area (El Paso, Texas, and New Mexico), but have never seen the initials by themselves or in a diamond. Others I have asked have seen the initials in several other combinations. It is possible that these other combinations appear on different types of bottles or on those made at different plants (or both).

Please check your collections and let

me know the following about any IPG, IPGCo, IPC, or IPCCo bottles you may have:

1) Which mark is on your bottle(s) – IPG, IPGCo, IPC, or IPCCo?

2) Is it just the initials or are they in a diamond or in a triangle? Do they have periods in between the letters or not?

3) Is the mark on the bottle's heel or on the base?

4) Are there any numbers embossed on the bottle? If so, what are they? Are they separated by a dash or any letters?

5) Are the numbers on the heel, the crown (or other finish), or the base? Are they on the same side of the bottle as the logo?

6) Is the bottle blown into a mold (mold lines stop before they reach the finish) or machine made (mold lines extend to the top of the lip)?

7) Do any IPCCo (Illinois Pacific Coast Co.) or IPC bottles have two-digit date codes?

8) What kind of bottle is it? Fruit jar, soda, beer, medicine, milk, something else?

Illinois Pacific had plants in San Francisco, Los Angeles, Oakland, Portland, and Seattle. If any of you collectors on the West Coast can help with information on any of these plants and/or the marks they may have put on bottles, please let me know. It would also be helpful to know what types of bottles each plant made.

Finally, please check your bottles for AB-connected marks and A. B. Co. marks. Especially let me know about any made by machine and any possible date codes. I have yet to see an AB-connected bottle with anything but a crown finish. Has anyone seen one? Does anyone have a bottle with the AB-connected mark that was something other than a beer bottle?

In future issues, I will let you know what I have found and what it all means.





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Mark	Company	Dates
	American Bottle Company	1905-1917
	American Bottle Company	1905-1917
	American Bottle Company	1905-1917
	Adolphus Busch Glass Manufacturing Co.	1885-1928